

A Guide to Young Professionals Programs

Developed for and with the Support of Local Chambers of Commerce

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A Call to Action for Young Professionals

Young professionals are the future of the business community. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce encourages local chambers to harness the skills and enthusiasm of young professionals in order to effect change and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Through Young Professionals (YP) programs, chambers can foster collective action among young business leaders and entrepreneurs by giving them the tools to mobilize and network.

Compiling and expanding upon the advice and experiences of local chambers across the country, this toolkit provides you with the resources to develop an effective YP program at your local chamber. Explore our engagement resources and event templates, utilize our messaging and programming tips, and experiment with suggested structures as you develop or improve your YP program.

Thank you to the following chambers of commerce for taking the time to share their experiences and insights regarding Young Professionals groups:

Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce
Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce
Pearland Chamber of Commerce
Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce
Prince William Chamber of Commerce
United States Junior Chambers of Commerce
Illinois Junior Chamber of Commerce
Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce

WHAT

is a Young Professionals (YP) program?

An Overview:

Effective YP programs achieve three important objectives—

1. Provide a chamber-supported space for young professionals to network, develop professionally, and engage with their community in a meaningful way
2. Increase awareness of local chambers of commerce and the importance of a strong business community amongst a young, diverse group of professionals
3. Institutionalize access to resources and a path to leadership within local chambers of commerce in order to catalyze further involvement and external professional success

Young professionals play a significant role in championing issues that will impact not only their generation, but future generations. It has become increasingly clear that chambers of commerce can play a formative role in engaging young professionals in a variety of different aspects of chamber programming. YP programs do away with misconceptions about young people's disconnect from the issues of the business community by exposing them to the advantages of chamber membership. These types of programs, in whatever capacity best suits your chamber, are beneficial to local chambers everywhere. Their existence, however, depends on all chamber-affiliated parties being fully aware of the benefits of a YP program. In order to achieve a higher degree of openness and accessibility to the opportunities of your chamber, your chamber must constantly reaffirm that young professionals not only matter, but can affect structural change and represent the future of business.

WHAT

is a Young Professionals (YP) program?

The Details:

Age Range:

While most YP programs offer membership to young professionals between the ages of 21 – 40 years old, this range is not definite and varies program to program.

Size:

YP programs across the country vary in size depending on the concentration of young people in the area. Evaluating the size and interest of that population in your area is an important step in deciding whether to move forward with a YP program at your local chamber.

Membership Dues:

Instituting a membership due for your YP program will vary by chamber depending on size and the program's ability to fund events through sponsorship. Each individual's investment in the program is a vital accountability mechanism and provides incentive to take advantage of the opportunities that are only available to paying members.

Expense:

Cost varies by chamber, depending on allocated and available resources and the surrounding community's interest in sponsoring the program. Budget for an initial investment to cover the cost of marketing and opening events. The largest cost may be the time of a fully- or partially-dedicated staff person. Nonetheless, YP programs are often managed by a committed, largely volunteer-based leadership team. Through event, venue and food sponsorship opportunities for chamber businesses and minimal non-member attendance fees, the program should become self-sustainable as its popularity increases. Many chambers are successful in obtaining sponsorship for the whole program from a local university or a business interested in young entrepreneurs.